

Look at the last updated information (usually at the bottom of the web page). This will tell you when the information was added. Look for references or links to the evidence.

Also check if the links to other information/sites work, are they broken? Too many of these may indicate that the site is no longer being maintained.

Where: What part of the world is the website coming from? Statistics and treatment information may not be relevant to the United Kingdom.

Look at the web address information as this will often indicate the country of origin and type of organisation. The URL (uniform resource locator) will also give clues. See below for examples:

.au = Australia  
.ca = Canada  
.de = Germany  
.com or .org = an organisation  
.ac = an educational site  
.gov = a government site

Here are some sites you might like to explore on the subject of sourcing reliable information:

### Staying safe online

[www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/digital-inclusion/Pages/get-online-take-control-of-your-health.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/digital-inclusion/Pages/get-online-take-control-of-your-health.aspx)

### MedlinePlus Guide to Healthy Web Surfing

<https://www.medlineplus.gov/healthywebsurfing.html>

# Finding Good Quality Health Information on the Internet

Health Information Websites



Adapted from a leaflet produced by Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust with kind permission.

Content reviewed September 2018

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***“Aspiring to deliver world class patient care”***

## **Introduction**

During your treatment journey you will have been given information from your health care professionals. The purpose of this booklet is to help you to find quality and trustworthy sources of health information on the internet. You can then choose to add to the information you have already been given and research health related issues for yourself.

(If you do not have a computer or mobile device you can use your local public library. If you take this booklet with you, they can help you access the websites listed).

The internet is a wonderful resource but not everything found on it is trustworthy, accurate, reliable or up-to-date. Anyone can put information on it but there is no editor checking for inaccuracies or out of date information. It is up to the user to decide how relevant the information is and to determine the reliability of what they find.

So how can you decide what to trust?

## **Quality Standards**

There are two quality standards found on health websites which are a clear indication that the information they contain should be trustworthy.

Many good sites do not have these but these standards are one way for you to judge the reliability of a website.

### **The information Standard**

This is an independent certification programme commissioned by NHS England. It is awarded to organisations producing clear, accurate, up-to-date evidenced health information.

The Information Standards website has a list of all bodies it has given certification to.

For more information about the scheme and a list of those organisations who have been awarded a certificate, see <http://www.england.nhs.uk/tis/>



### **Health on the Net Foundation**

HON is a Non-Governmental Organisation, internationally known for its work in the field of health information, ethics and was founded to encourage the dissemination of quality health information.



Please note that the “Health On the Net” logo may appear on sites that are not certified. To check certification, click on the HON logo. You should be directed to a page that includes the HON code number for the site. [www.hon.ch](http://www.hon.ch)

### **General Health Websites**

These websites have general health information and lifestyle topics.

### **The NHS website (formerly NHS Choices)**

This site is funded by the Department of Health. It is committed to providing trustworthy information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare. The NHS website ensures its content is evidence-based and includes the best scientific knowledge availa-

ble. It is accredited by The Information Standard.

The NHS website:

<http://www.nhs.uk/>

### **Patient**

Patient is the UK's leading independent health site, established for over 15 years. With more than 8 million visits a month it is a trusted source of information for both patients and health professionals nationwide.

The site contains over 4000 health information leaflets, a wellbeing centre, a free health check and thousands of discussion forums. It is accredited by The Information Standard and HON.

The Patient website: <https://patient.info/>

### **What about health websites that do not have a quality standard?**

When you are looking at a website, remember W W W

**Who:** Who is the author or publisher of the site and what are their credentials? Are they fair in what they say? What are their reasons for publishing, for example, are they trying to give you information or sell you something? Do other websites link to them?

Look at the About Us section on the site. This should give you some of this information.

**What:** What is on the site? Does the information seem accurate? Is it relevant and up-to-date? Do they link the information to evidence? Do they tell you where the information has come from?